

PEOPLE & THINGS

By ATTICUS

OF the personalities involved in the changes on the United States Chiefs of Staff, General Ridgway and Admiral Carney, who are leaving, are both rather austere figures.

General Ridgway's appearance in Korea when things were going badly had an electric effect; he stopped the rot, and his frequent appearances at the front with a couple of grenades hanging from his belt were effective. But he lacks airs and graces; and when he arrived to take over S.H.A.P.E. from General Eisenhower, a clanging of mental grenades accompanied him down the echoing plaster-board corridors of Marly.

Admiral Carney bears an uncanny resemblance to President Wilson; he is the sort of sailor whom one can imagine revelling in the substitution of lime-juice for rum.

The New Chiefs

THEIR successors, General Taylor and Admiral Burke, though no less resolute, are more invigorating. General "Max" Taylor, like General "Mat" Ridgway, has an airborne history. In Berlin his relations with our General Bourne, during and after the air-lift, might stand as a blue-print for what military Anglo-American relations should be.

He has a healthy suspicion of pessimistic intelligence appreciations: "Don't you let G.2 paint my enemy nine feet tall," is a favourite dictum.

Admiral "Thirty-one Knot" Arleigh Burke had the misfortune, as a Captain, U.S.N., to be called upon to give evidence before a Congressional Committee on some matter of service policy. He gave it truthfully, a process which required him to depart from his brief; and he was in consequence passed over for promotion to Admiral. There was a national outcry, and he got his promotion, though a year late. Now he has leapt over the heads of sixty seniors to become the equivalent of First Sea Lord.

If modesty, a sense of humour, strict integrity, a quick brain and a fine fighting record at sea are useful endowments, President Eisenhower has chosen well.

Top of the Form

WHILE I was talking to Mrs. Katharine White in her London hotel she took a telephone call. At the other end a voice, strangled with English breeding, proclaimed itself to represent a famous provincial newspaper, "Might we," it asked sedately, "if you wouldn't think the idea too giddy, send someone round to photograph you and Mr. White leapfrogging?" Mrs. White, though by no means lacking in savoir faire, was still silently working it out when there came shouts of laughter and the voice, now richly American, inquired: "How d'you like my English accent?" It was James Thurber.

The E. B. Whites are paying their first visit to Britain since 1928. For years after the founding of the "New Yorker" magazine by Harold Ross, White and Thurber were responsible for its "Talk of the Town" editorials. Mrs. White also joined the "New Yorker" staff in its first year—1925—and rose from manuscript reader

to Head of the Fiction Department, a post she resigned in 1938. Nowadays White is a contributing editor, still writing some of the "Notes and Comment" column (he instigated the magazine's vehement campaign against loud-speaker advertising in public places), and Mrs. White is an associate editor, or, more informally, a "fine sieve" passing the pick of the fiction manuscripts for publication.

Mrs. White protests uncompromisingly against the "great fallacy" that there is a "New Yorker" style which pervades any writing which appears between its covers. "Now who could say that our stories by O'Connor, Irwin Shaw, Jean Stafford and O'Hara, for instance, are all written in 'New Yorker' style?" she asks, mystified. Many authors, however, owe much to the editors, and probably even more to the "team of demon proof-readers" who toil tirelessly to maintain the magazine's reputation for phenomenal accuracy.

Sir Scrutator

THE award of a knighthood to Mr. R. C. K. Ensor will, of course, have given pleasure not only in Oxford, but everywhere where history is written or read. But there is an even larger circle of persons who have benefited unknowingly, for many years past, by Mr. Ensor's wise and scrupulous examination of current events.

It may now, in fact, be revealed that Mr. Ensor was for many years "Scrutator" of THE SUNDAY TIMES. His colleagues have missed not only those shrewd articles, but also the lapidary footnotes which he added, *viva voce*, when visiting the office.

Footnotes of this kind are still being contributed. I am glad to say, by Mr. Raymond Mortimer, our distinguished literary critic, whose appearance in the same Honours List delighted not only ourselves but those many authors whose talents he has helped to shape during the last thirty years.

Arts 'from Denmark

THE Danish Festival of Music and Ballet, which has just ended, was a splendid success and also a foretaste of what the Royal Danish Ballet will be bringing to the Edinburgh Festival.

There is still hope that the somewhat tedious "Capricious Lucinda" will give way to their "Petrushka" (superbly danced by Borge Ralov), but "La Sylphide" is a certainty and I look forward to Scotland's reaction to its diagonal and up-ended tartans and to the sporrans hitched round the male dancers' lower ribs.

"Moby" Welles

WHEN Orson Welles's play "Moby Dick" opens this week at the Duke of York's it will be a relief to everyone concerned.

The complaint of Mr. Welles that he is "going nuts" is understandable. He is not only the author and producer but is also playing three parts, that of "governor" of the company who, in the play, are supposed to be rehearsing "Moby Dick"; and, in the play within the play, the parts of Captain Ahab and Father Mapple. The latter role alone consists of one speech so long and arduous that Mr. Welles was paid £8,000 for playing it in the film of "Moby Dick."

The only actress, Joan Plowright as Pip, the mad cabin-boy, is one of the few performers in the cast who are not playing three roles. Only the whale "has it good." He was found to be too large for the stage.